

Tortoise or Turtle



First Grade Lesson Summary ELA and Science

Students will compare and contrast Tortoises and Turtles

National Science Education Science Standards Connection:

The National Science Education Standards has said that making observations is key to inquiry-based and discovery-focused learning in science instruction. In order to do this students participate in inquiry-based learning that allows them to solve a problem in science through observation, discourse and using a science journal. Students will then be give a chance to share their findings with their peers and then reflect on their own understanding.

The standard addressed in this unit requires students to make observations and identify functions of structures (animal parts) that help animals survive in nature. In this lesson my students get to observe and collect data on the animal (reptile) parts and functions of these parts.

This lesson is brought to you by our classroom pets Moses and Birdie

Moses: Is a Greek tortoise, also known as the spur-thighed tortoise, He is 8 years old. He is NOT a turtle.

Birdie: Is a Russian tortoise, also known as the Afghan tortoise, She is 2 years old. She is NOT a turtle.



This is Moses. He was rescued 5 years ago. Pets in the Classroom has helped bring learning to life literally in my room. We use our tortoises cross curricular. **Math**, we weigh and measure them, **Reading**, take turns providing a homemade lunch, **Speech**, educating visitors about the difference between tortoises and turtles, **etc.** He is the BEST class pet: Quiet, No Smells, and LOVES attention. He now has a best friend who shares the spotlight. Her name is Birdie. She is equally loved by all first graders.



Materials:

- Birdie and Moses – You could use pictures of tortoises
- Parent volunteers to help assist with small groups.
- Don't Call Me Turtle by Elaine A. Powers
- Turtle – I borrow one from a friend each year. You could use a picture of a turtle.
- Turtle and Tortoise figurines
- Turtle and Tortoise books
- I pad – for video observations and further study- Science Kids is a free app.
- Anchor Chart
- Vocabulary Cards Posted
- Venn Diagram I create one with the shell as the middle the left side has a tortoise head and claws. The right side has a turtle head with flippers.
- Science Journal to record findings students can glue in their observation recording sheet into the journal.



Essential Question: What is the difference between a tortoise and a turtle?

Students collect and record observations in their science journals. I encourage the use of pictures to help them remember what they wrote when it comes time to report back to the whole class. I am looking for illustrations and words to describe their findings. They follow prompts with adults as assistants to help with organization skills.

For example:

- Where does your reptile live primarily on land or in the water?
- What does your reptile eat primarily? Is it a carnivore or a herbivore?
- Given 2 pictures students can explain if their reptile is a tortoise or a turtle and explain the characteristics that support their hypothesis.

As the students share orally I tell them to refer back to their research.



Facts to cover:

- Turtles swim / tortoises do not
- Both have shells
- Tortoise shells are heavier and have a higher dome
- Both have skeletons
- Both have carapaces, plastrons and bridges
- Turtles eat meat and insects mainly
- Tortoises eat mainly grasses
- Both lay eggs – I show pictures of eggs Birdie actually laid this past year.

Extension

- Complete a diagram of both a tortoise and a turtle labeling the parts of each. Then write 3 facts specific to each reptile.



Journal time in
our reading box.
The tortoises live
up on top.

